(c) and (d) As per the large sample surveys of the household consumption expenditure conducted by the National Sample Survey Organisation, the *per capita* consumption expenditure in urban areas has been higher than in rural areas by an almost constant 60% in 1987-88 and 1993-94.

Transfer of funds from Non-lapsable Central Pool

1653. DR. (SHRIMATI) JOYASHREE GOSWAMI MAHANTA: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state whether any decision has been taken to transfer funds from the Non-lapsable Central Pool of Resources to the beneficiary State as 100 per cent grants as requested by Government of Assam instead of 90 per cent grant and 10 per cent loan as at present?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PLANNING, MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF STATISTICS AND PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION AND MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF ADMINISTRATIVE REFORMS AND PUBLIC GRIEVANCES OF THE MINISTRY OF PERSONNEL, PUBLIC GRIEVANCES AND PENSIONS (SHRI ARUN SHOURIE): A decision in this regard is yet to be taken.

Non utilisation of plan budget on NER by Ministries/Departments

1654. DR. (SHRIMATI) JOYASREE GOSWAMI MAHANTA: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whethr it is a fact that some Ministries/Departments are not spending stipulated 10 percent of their plan budget on North-East and are also not transferring the unspent balance to the non-lapsable central pool of resources, although they are required to do so;

(b) if so, which are those Departments and Ministries;

(c) whether any action will be taken against the defaulting departments; and

(d) what is the amount that have not been transferred to the nonlapsable central pool resources during 1998-99 and 1999-2000 Ministry/Department-wise?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PLANNING, MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF STATISTICS AND PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION AND MINISTER OF STATE IN THE

DEPARTMENT OF ADMINISTRATIVE REFORMS AND PUBLIC GRIEVANCES OF THE MINISTRY OF PERSONNEL, PUBLIC GRIEVANCES AND PENSIONS (SHRI ARUN SHOURIE): (a) to (d) All Union Ministries/ Departments are required to spend atleast 10% of their Budget(s) on schemes/ projects for the benefit of the North-Eastern Region and Sikkim. Some Union Ministries/Departments have been specifically exempted from the requirement because of the location/scheme specific nature of the plan provision in their Budgets. Shortfalls in meeting this target are to be pooled in a Central Pool of Resources. Funds to the extent of Rs. 121.95 crores and Rs. 303.97 crores were identified for the Central Pool in respect of the years 1998-99 and 1999-2000 respectively against which releases were made for the various projects in the North-East and Sikkim.

A quick review has revealed that total expenditure on the North-East by the Central Ministries/Departments which was about 5.8% of Gross Budgetary Support for the year 1997-98 increased to about 7.5% during 1998-99, and it is expected to go up further during 2000-2001. Besides, to ensure that adequate Plan allocation is made for the North-East (and Sikkim), Ministries/Departments have been advised to indicate under a separate Head 10% of Plan allocation for the Annual Plan 2000-2001. Furthermore, the number of "exempted" Departments referred to above has been brought down from 19 to 8. Formally to improve the skills of the officers of the North East in project preparation and monitoring a workshop was recently organised in the Indian Institute of Management, Calcutta.

MEP for coir and coir products

1655. SHRI A. VIJAYA RAGHAVAN: Will the Minister of SMALL SCALE INDUSTRIES AND AGRO AND RURAL INDUSTRIES be pleased to state:

(a) whether the National Council for Applied Economic Research (NCAER) has recommended for the gradual phase out of M.E.P. of coir and coir products;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether Government have taken any action in this regard; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI OMAR ABDULLAH): (a) to (d) The National Council